

# Heavy landings of the unicorn leatherjacket filefish, *Aluterus monoceros* from the Gulf of Mannar

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Heavy landings of the unicorn leatherjacket filefish, *Aluterus monoceros* (Linnaeus, 1758) was observed at Pamban Therkuvady fish landing centre, landed by trawlers operating in Gulf of Mannar (Fig. 1). This fish is locally known as “clathy”. *A. monoceros* is a reef-associated species under the family Monacanthidae. Distribution of this species is circumtropical and recorded from Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. Unusual heavy landings of this species at Chennai Fisheries Harbour were reported during the period from September to December, 2010.

On 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2011 large quantities of *A. monoceros* amounting to 1-2 t per boat was landed at Pamban by trawl. The trawl nets were operated in a depth range of 40-50 m, at a distance of 55-65 km from the shore. About 15 units out of 70 units landed

brought heavy landings of this fish. A total of 24,350 kg of *A. monoceros* was landed on that day alone. The specimens landed had a length range of



Fig. 1. Heavy landings of *A. monoceros* at Pamban landing centre on 30.09.2011

490-530 mm and weighed between 1 to 2 kg each (Fig. 2). The fish was sold @ ₹ 65/- per kg.

On enquiry, fishermen informed that this fish was always available in the Gulf of Mannar, but due to low price they were not catching them. Recently, there was a hike in price of this fish registering an increase

from ₹ 35/- to ₹ 65/- per kg. Accompanied by this increased price, this fish is being caught and landed in large quantities in this area. According to local fishermen, the season for the fishery of *A. monoceros* is between July and February, especially during full moon period.